

A CRY for
LABOURERS
IN

Gods Harvest:

Being a

SERMON

Preached upon

The sad Occasion of the late FUNERAL
of that Eminent Servant of Christ

MR RALPH VENNING,

Who departed this Life,

March. 10. 1674.

By Robert Briggs, an unfeigned Lover of, and
Mourner for, the deceased.

LONDON, Printed, and are to be sold by John Hancock
Senior and Junior, at the sign of the three Bibles in
Popes-head Alley in Cornhill. 1674.

of dignity never had I (thought)
say you say again and again in your



To the READERS, and
more especially to such
as were the HEARERS
of this SERMON.

Though I should readily
welcome any occasion, to
testify to the world that
great respect and dear Af-
fection which I had for
the Person, in whose remembrance
this Sermon was Preached; yet (I

(*)

thought)

thought) I had reason enough to say you *Nay* again and again in your desires of Printing it : and indeed I cannot well answer it to my own Reason that I do now subscribe my *Placet* to the publication of it : For it seems (*volens nolens*) you will have it from me.

It had been excuse enough, that in the preparing this Discourse for the Pulpit, I had no thought at all of preferring it to the Press : And this the intelligent Reader will easily believe me in, when he sees how Home-spun and plain, both Matter and Style of it are. Truly I am afraid, lest some that knew what a popular, and excellent Preacher Mr. *Venn* was, will think him disparaged, and not honoured by such a Discourse, when they shall behold, instead of a
Vel-

Velvet Pall, but a piece of Fretze for
his covering.

When I heard the sad tidings of
the Death of this my dear Brother
and fellow-helper; The Text here
treated on was the first Scripture
that came into my mind, and I judg'd
it might be a word in season to
that Congregation who had enjoyed
his worthy labours, and were more
immediately concerned in his Death
and loss. To help them in the Im-
provement of this sad stroke was all
that I intended: For how could I
think there would be need of a Fu-
neral Oration, of any Elegies or Enco-
miums to keep up the Name and Me-
mory of such a one, whose praise is
in the Gospel throughout all the Chur-
ches, and whose own works left behind,
(* 2) will

will ever praise him in the Gates of this
great City & gairavoc ail

I do not question at all the accep-
tance of this work, how mean and slender
so ever it be; because (as the Pic-
ture of a dead Friend) it may serve to
put you in mind of him whom you so
dearly loved; and have so great cause to
remember.

If the having of these Lines before
your eyes may affect your hearts; If
it may be of use to you; to stir up
the Grace of God in you; and to en-
gage you in this great Duty: which
the Judgements of Gods Hand as well
as of his Mouth do call aloud for;
I shall not think my labour lost.

I never Preached a Sermon with a
sadder

Sadder Heart; nor to be Sadder! And
why so? I did not much wonder to see
so many weeping Eyes, when I con-
sidered for whom you wept. You
have lost one that was an Interpreter,
a Preacher! one of a thousand! Oh,
how was he wont to lift up his Voice
like a Trumpet, what Musick was
he wont to make in your Ears, what
Melody in your Hearts? How spiri-
tually, and sweetly did he use to
Pray? How powerfully and profita-
bly did he use to Preach? What an
holy Art had he of dividing the Word
aright, both to those that were with-
out and those within?

Methinks I see you still flocking
about him, and hanging like a com-
pany of Bees upon his Lips. What
Milk and Honey did there use to drop
thence!

thence ! He fed you not only with the Milk, but with the Cream of the Word. I doubt not but there are some, yea, many of you that have cause to bless God that ever you saw his Face, and heard his Voice, God having spoken not only to your Ears, but to your Hearts by him.

He hath now Prayed and Preached his last with you, he is at rest from his Labours, and his works follow him. Pray ye the Lord of the Harveſt, that he would continue the faithful Labourers, that are yet among you, that the Harveſt may not be loſt for want of Labourers, that none of his Churches may be left as Sheep without a Shepherd : And Pray ye that He would ſend forth
more

more Labourers into the Harveſt ;
that the number of thoſe that Love
and Fear him in the Earth may be
increaſed, and ſuch added to the Church
as ſhall be ſaved. And let all that love
the Lord ſay *Amen*, and *Amen*.

So Prays

An unworthy Servant,

R. BRAGGE.

more laborers into the harvest
that the number of those that Love
and Fear him in the Earth may be
increased, and thus added to the Church
as shall be loved. And let all that love
the Lord my Father, and have

So says

the Father in Heaven.

R. B. A. G. I.



MATTH. IX. 38.

*Pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that
he would send forth Labourers into his Har-
vest.*



YOU are not ignorant of the Oc-
casion of my choosing this Text.
And the Text, as you may per-
ceive, doth suit the Occasion.
God is calling his Labourers out
of his Harvest apace, he removes
them by pairs, yea by clusters; what
shall we do, what is like to become
of us? That is the Question. I know that you have great
thoughts of heart about it. There is like to be a
great dearth and scarcity of faithful Labourers in God's
Harvest. We have here the Counsel that our Lord
Christ himself gives in this very case, that we should
*Pray the great Lord of the Harvest, that he would
send*

send forth Labourers into his Harvest.

You see what the duty of the Text is, that is, *Prayer.*

Who it is that we must pray unto, to him that is the great Lord of the Harvest.

What it is that we must pray for, *that he would send forth Labourers into his Harvest.* Then,

Truly, You have the *Therefore*, or the Reason why he presses this duty upon his Disciples, *The Harvest truly is great* (saith he in the former Verse) *but the Labourers are few.* The people did flock after Christs Ministry in great multitudes, and he had compassion upon them, because he saw them *as Sheep without a Shepherd.* Pray you therefore, saith he, *the Lord of the Harvest, that he would send forth Labourers into his Harvest.* The Lesson or Observation that I would put you upon the learning and practice of, is this.

DOCT.

That it is the Duty of every good Christian, Man or Woman, to pray and cry mightily, that the Lord would send forth more Labourers into his Harvest, especially when there is a great scarcity and want of Labourers in the Harvest.

In the prosecuting hereof we would do something by way of Explanation, something by way of Confirmation, and something by way of Application.

For Explanation, there are only two things;

1. What we are to understand here by the *Harvest.*
2. Who are those *Labourers in the Harvest.*

1. What

1. What are we to understand by the *Harvest*? Thereby I take to be meant the People that were to be gathered in to Christ by the Preaching of the Gospel. Christ you know did often speak in Parables; and that People it seems delighted much in Similitudes and Parables: And therefore the Scripture doth so often make use of such kind of comparisons and similitudes as these are. The Lords People they are sometimes compared to a *Garden*, sometimes to a *Vineyard*, or as here to a Tilled and *Harvest-field*. So that our Souls they are Gods Field and Harvest. What doth that imply? It implies these two things.

1. It shews us what we are by Nature. When the Gospel doth first come unto us, that we are as an untilled Field, as a barren Defart, or as an unfruitful Wilderness. In *Gen. 3.* and about the 18th. you read there, upon mans sin that God had *Cursed the Earth*, therefore *Thorns and Thistles shall it bring forth*. There was the like Curse upon the heart of man; from that time it brought forth nothing but Thorns and Thistles. So that as it is with persons that are travelling through some Defart places over high Mountains, through rocky and stony waies, where there is no husbandry used, there grows nothing but Bryars and Thorns and unfruitful Trees, such as are fit for the fire: Such are the hearts and lives of all the children of men by Nature; like the Ground the Apostle speaks of in the sixth of the *Hebrews*, that *brings forth nothing but Thorns and Nettles, which is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned*. As for those fruits of the Flesh, which the Apostle speaks of in *Gal. 5. 19.* *Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations,*

*tions, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, and the like, these fruits abound every where. But as for those fruits of the Spirit, which he mentions in the following verse, which is Love and Joy and Peace, Long-sufferings, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, and this like; These fruits grow not in Natures Garden. One asking a Gardiner what the reason was that Weeds did spring so naturally out of the Ground, when it was to hard a thing to make good Plants and Flowers grow in it: He answered, Because the Earth was as a Natural Mother to the Weeds, but was become as a Step-mother to the Plants. Thus it is with all our hearts by nature, the things of Grace and Godliness, they are not only above our corrupt natures, but contrary to them. In a word, my Brethren, What were all those Churches you read of in the New Testament, the *Roman, Corinthian*, and the rest of them before the Gospel was Preached to them? They were all but as a noisome Dunghill, or barren Wilderness to God, till the Apostles came to Preach amongst them, and to Plant them; and then indeed the Wilderness was turned into a fruitful Garden, then was fulfilled that of the Prophet, *Instead of the Bryar, came up the Fir-tree, &c.* Then,*

2. As this shews us what we are by Nature, so it evidences, *Secondly*, What we should be when the Gospel comes to us. As the Ground receives in the Plow and the Seed that it may bring forth the Harvest, so should we be willing to hear the Word and to receive the Gospel, that we may be gathered in unto Christ by Faith and Repentance. As the Prophet *Jer. 4. 3.* He bids us *Plow up the fallow ground; for thus*

A General Sermon.

thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah, and Jerusalem, Break up the fallow ground, and sow not among Thorns. The Husbandman doth not use to cast his Seed among the Thorns without first breaking up the fallow Ground, without first loosening the root of the Thorns, and cleansing it from the Weeds, and when the fallow Ground is broken up, many times it needs to be Plowed not only once, but twice or three times before it is fit to receive the Seed. Thus it is with our hearts by Nature, we need to be Plowed by the Word over and over, and to be Harrowed by Afflictions again and again before we are fit to receive the Seed, and to bring forth fruit to God. Break up the fallow Ground, and sow not among Thorns. For persons to sow their Seed without Plowing the Ground, that were a preposterous course: And so it is with many people; when they are convinced that they have lived wickedly, they think they will now mend their waies and do better, and perform some good actions that God approves of, and then they hope all will be well. I, but that is to sow without Plowing, God will never have a good Crop here; Ungodliness will never be rooted out, nor Godliness truly implanted in the soul, except our hearts be first Plowed and broken up. Therefore as the Plow you know doth enter into the bowels and heart of the Earth, doth rend it open, and break it to pieces; so there are some truths of the Word, which are like the Plowshare to enter into our hearts, and to rend them, and break them to pieces; such as the knowledge of the purity and exactness of Gods Law, and of the evil of sin; and that dreadful curse we have brought upon our selves by it, and of the sinfulness of our Natures,

how all our faculties are full of this sin. And therefore we should joyn in with God in those things that are revealed to us concerning our lost and undone condition by Nature; we should labour clearly to understand what is delivered in the Word concerning our lost estate, and to work those truths upon our hearts, that we may be sensible of them, and to beg of the Lord that he would set them home upon us, that we may be truly sensible of them. For Ministers they can only sow the Truths in your Ears and your Heads, you must take them and labour to sow them in your Hearts; and when the Truths come close to you at any time, as a Sword piercing through your lusts, and dividing between the Marrow and the Joynts, *Joh. 2.* you should bid it welcom. The Psalmist complains that *the Plowers made deep furrows on their backs*; but I may say blessed are those Men and Women on whose hearts and consciences the Word doth make deep furrows. For the great reason why so much of the Seed in the Parable of the Sower miscarried, was because it wanted Root. So much for the first, what is meant by the *Harvest*.

2. Who are these *Labourers* in this Harvest? There is no doubt of it but Christ thereby means the Prophets of the Old Testament, and the Apostles of the New Testament, and the faithful Ministers of Christ in every Generation, who are to labour in the Preaching of the Gospel, and the salvation of souls. And though this be the most blessed and glorious work that any Man or Angel can possibly be employed in, to be recovering and reducing lost man to God his first cause and principle; yet this shews us the nature of the work, namely that the calling of a Minister is a laborious

borious Calling; and so the Apostle in *1 Tim. 5. 7.*
Let the elders that rule well, be accounted worthy of
double honour, they that labour in the word and Do-
ctrine; the word signifies not only Labour but Pains,
 or painful labour, such wherein men do spend their
 strength and spirits, so that their life many times goeth
 out in their Labour. And this is likewise held out to
 us by those many Metaphors that the Scripture doth
 apply to the Ministers of the Gospel. They are com-
 pared here in the Text, you see, to *Harvest men;* the
 Husbandmans work of Plowing and Harrowing, Sow-
 ing and Reaping, it is a laborious and painful work;
 and the sweat of the Brain is no less than that of the
 Brow. So sometimes they are called *Builders;* as in
1 Cor. 3. 9. We are Labourers together with God, you are
Gods husbandry, you are Gods building. Now the
 Building of Houses that is a laborious work; for the
 House is not built of the Trees as they are standing
 in the Forest; or of the Stones as they are in the
 Quarry; but there must be hewing the Stones, and
 squaring the Timber for the building the House. What
 is the Ministers work but to build up an House for God,
 an Habitation for Jesus Christ? As the materials with
 which the Temple was built of old, were first squared,
 and fitted, and prepared for the Building; so must
 souls be for this spiritual House. So that indeed Mi-
 nisters are as Carpenters, and Masons: *I have hewn*
them by my Prophets; and that sheweth they have hard
 labour of it, and many times meet with knotty pieces;
 very hard hearts, such as have made some of the best of
 Gods Labourers complain, cry out and resolve with *Je-*
remy, they would *Speak no more in the name of the Lord:*
 So I might shew you likewise how they are compared.

to *Shepherds*, and *wardens*, whose calling you know have labour in them. But to name no more, their labour is compared to that which is the greatest labour of all; What is that? to the labour of a Woman in Travail, *Gal. 4. 19. My little Children, of whom I travail in Birth again until Christ be formed in you.* Thus it is with faithful Ministers, they have many a Pang, many a throw of heart, before Christ be formed in them to whom they Preach. So if you look upon the work of the Ministry in these Metaphors, by which the Scripture doth express it, you see their calling is a laborious calling. So if you look upon it out of these Metaphors you may see there is much of labour in this work; there is labour to Preach the word, labour in Reading, Studying, Praying and Meditating, as *Paul* bids *Timothy* give himself unto Prayer and reading the word, &c. and there is labour in dispensing the Word. There is a double labour, the labour of the Mind as well as the Body. There is labour to instruct the ignorant, to shew man his unrighteousness, and to shew man his righteousness; labour to exhort and quicken those that are sluggish, labour in resolving those that doubt, and in comforting those that are sad; there is labour in bringing in Souls to Christ, and labour in building up souls when they are brought in. Do but see what is said of *John* the Baptist, who, you know, was a Labourer in Gods Harvest, (*Luke 3. 5.*) what his work was. *Every Valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth.* Now to level mountains and fill up Valleys, to make crooked things straight and rough ways smooth, this cannot

cannot be done without labour. And yet my brethren, there is greater labour than the faithful Ministers of Christ sometimes go through than all this; they are forced oftentimes not only to sweat at the Plough, but bleed at the Cross; they labour in enduring reproaches and Persecutions they meet with in the world for the truths sake. *Remember my brethren, saith James, the Prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an Example of suffering Affliction and of Patience.* Who would have thought they should meet with any hard usage for speaking to People in the name of the Lord? What saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. 2. 3. *Truly God hath made us a spectacle to the world;* Why for? *we are appointed to death every day, and reckoned the off-scouring of the world.* They are the greatest enemies the Devil and his Kingdom hath in the world, and therefore the Devil is so great an enemy to them. The faithful Ministers of Christ stand in the front of opposition. That is the Devils principle, *Smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered;* So that then you see they are much mistaken who look upon a Ministers life as an easie, if not an Idle life; who think all their labours but a little Lip-labour. I might tell you it is no easie thing for you to hear a Sermon well; and then sure it cannot be such an easie thing to preach well; it will cost you labour to hear aright. I grant it is an easie thing to give the Minister the hearing; but to give the ears to the Minister; to give every truth a double hearing, that is a hard matter. I grant it is an easie thing to let in a Sermon at one ear and to let it out at the other; but to let a Sermon in at the ear and to let it sink down in the heart; and thence

to spring up in the life, this is a hard thing. It is an easie thing to write down a Sermon in your Books, and to repeat it at night in your Families, and to discourse and talk of it; but to get this Sermon written in your hearts and to repeat it over in your lives, to be doers of it and not hearers only, this will require pains and labour. Thus we have shewn you what this *Harvest* is, here spoken of, and who the *Labourers* are: and now we come near to the point it self, to shew that it is your duty to *Pray the Lord of the Harvest that he would send forth more Labourers into his Harvest*. Here are these three things offer themselves to be spoken to for the confirming of the point.

1. That the Ministry of the word, it is a very great gift and blessing to a people.

2. That God and God alone, it belongs to him to send forth these Labourers into his Harvest.

3. That our duty and work is to Pray and Pray earnestly to God, that he would increase the number of his faithful Labourers. And these may serve as the grounds and reasons of the Point, for I shall name no other.

1. Then do you ask me why we should pray to God to send forth more Labourers into his Harvest? Because I say to have these faithful Labourers among you, is one of the greatest gifts and blessings that God can bestow upon a People. See what Christ himself saith of such, *Matth. 5. 13. Ye are the salt of the Earth*, &c. You know that salt savours every thing, and that it is to preserve things from Rotting and Putrefaction, so that salt is a very useful and necessary thing in the world; you know not how to be without it. Of such use and necessity is the Ministry of
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the word, for the whole world would Rot and Perish without it. All the Hearts of men and women in the World that live without the Gospel they are to God as rotten and stinking meat, as filthy carrion is to you. Indeed when once the hearts and minds of People are seasoned with the Gospel, now they become sweet and savoury to God, so *Vers. 14.* What would this World be without the Sun in the Firmament shining upon it, but a dark Dungeon? Such, my Brethren, and no other are all the Kingdoms, Nations, Cities, Countries, Parishes, Villages in the World where the light of the Gospel doth not shine. Where they have not had the Ministry of the Word, neither Prophets, nor Apostles, nor faithful Ministers of Christ, to preach the Gospel and to make known the mind and will of God to them, they are but as so many dark dungeons, where the Prince of darkness reigns, where unbelief, Idolatry, Superstition, and all manner of wickedness, and profaneness reigns. I say the state of nature is a state of darkness; all the world doth but grope in darkness, as the Egyptians did, till they come to have the Gospel preached to them. Alas! they know little of God, and nothing of Jesus Christ, nor of the Gospel nor of the Covenant of Grace, nor of the way to salvation by a Redeemer, nor what the new Creature is, and the work of Regeneration is. How great a blessing and great gift therefore is it to have the Ministry of the Gospel? You may see it by that promise God gives out in *Jer. 3. 15.* *And I will give you Pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.* As if he had said; Here is the Blessing, the Blessing of Blessings

sing: I will bestow upon you, for there is none comparable to it. Suppose a man should have his habitation or dwelling in never so pure an Air, and never so good a soil, where he hath his Garden and his Fishponds, and all outward Contentment his heart can desire; but doth not the Sun of the Gospel shine there, the Air and Wind of the Spirit breath there, the clouds of Gods Ordinances drop there? then I say it is but a dark and black place: If the best things be not to be had there, what is it for a man to be fatted to destruction, what is a life without a life of Grace?

Again what a Blessing it is, may appear in that it was the fruit of Christs prayer, of his death, blood and intercession; *Ephes. 4. 8, 11.* you read there of Christs ascending to Glory; *when he ascended up on high, he gave gifts to men.* You know Kings and Emperours upon the day of their Coronation, they use to scatter Money, and let Conduits run with Wine, give gifts to their friends; this was the day Christ went up to Heaven, and went to take his Crown of Glory, now he gave gifts to men. *Vers. 11.* What did he give them for? *for the Perfecting Saints.* As if here was the greatest gifts the Son of God had to bestow on the Children of men, here was the fruit of his Blood as well as Intercession. Had it not been for the Blood of Christ, there had never been any such thing as a Gospel-Ministry, or Church, or Ordinances. In a word; If you consider the great ends for which the Ministry is given, it is for the bringing about the greatest good of the Children of men, it is for the bringing you to the knowledge of God and his Son Jesus Christ, *whom to know is eternal life;*

A Funeral Sermon.

it is to reveal the great Counsels of God to the Children of men. The Preaching of the Gospel, it is not only to civilize men and women, though that were good if it were no more, and many times where it hath not its saving work, it hath the Authority to make people civil; but I say the Preaching of the Gospel, it is not only to make you civil, but to make you Saints, new Creatures.

2. *Pray ye the Lord of the Harvest that he would send forth more Labourers into his Harvest.* Why, it belongs to the great Lord of the Harvest to give these Labourers. The sending of Labourers into this Harvest is not only an Act of Grace and Mercy, but of Power and greatest Authority. Therefore *Matth. 28.* when Christ sends forth his Disciples to Preach, mark the Preface, *Vers. 18.* *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given to me in Heaven and in Earth.* Mark how Christ doth begin with the preamble of *all power being given to him in Heaven and in Earth.* It is as if he had said, I am sending you about the greatest work that ever any Creatures were employed in; the Angels in Heaven were not employed in a greater work than this of Preaching the Gospel; for your Incouragement know, all power in Heaven and in Earth is given into my hands, and I will be with you and second you. Here I might shew you how the Lord of the Harvest doth send forth his Labourers.

1. It is he that calls them, he that gives them their Mission and Commission; they have their Commis-

on from Christ, from Father, Son, and holy Spirit, all their names are in the Commission, though it is more Immediately from the Son. Indeed did not God send them, they could never expect to do any good in the World, to convert one soul, were not Preaching Gods Ordinance.

2. It is he must gift and qualifie these Labourers for the work. As in *Nehem. 9. 10.* saith *Nehemiah* there, *Thou gavest thy holy Spirit; Vers. 20. Thou gavest also thy good Spirit.* The meaning is, in the Prophets which he gave them, whereby they were fitted for the Work they were set about. So it is still under the Gospel, *1 Cor. 12. 4, 5.* *Now there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit; and there are differences of Administrations but the same Lord.* Whence are these diversities of gifts and ministerial Abilities? they are from God. This indeed my Brethren is very wonderful to be considered. As you see a multitude of faces in the world, yet every one differs from another; so to consider that diversity, that variety of gifts and spiritual Abilities God hath given to men in this work, yet none hath the same gift: To one the gift of Doctrine, to another the gift of Exhortation. One he is as a Son of Thunder to awaken, another is a Son of Consolation to comfort. I say variety of gifts, and why? to profit withall. It is all for your profit, that if you are not taken with one mans gifts, you may be with others.

3. It is the Lord of the Harvest that doth send forth and design every Labourer to his particular place and station

station wherein he is to labour, it is he that appoints them the bounds of their habitation. The Apostle he bids them *feed the Church of God over which the H. Ghost had made them Overseers*; the holy Ghost placed them there. If a Sparrow fall not to the ground without the power of God, much less doth a Minister preach a Sermon but there is a providence in it. When God sends a Minister to a Congregation, he doth lett out a piece of Land, or bids him husband that for me. *Levit. 27. 26.* You read there how God would have them to value their Land dedicated to God to be worth more or less according to the Seed of it, as it was capable of receiving much or less seed; so the Minister should value his Land according to his opportunity he hath to sow Seed there.

4. It is *the Lord of the Harvest* that must give success to these Labourers, or else all their Preaching and labouring will be but as Plowing and Sowing among the Rocks. You must not think Preaching of the Gospel doth work upon souls by any inherent vertue in the Word, as Fire warms, and Food nourishes, and Physick heals. If the Spirit of the Lord doth not go along with the Word, it will be but as Musick to the Deaf, &c. *1 Cor. 3. Paul may plant, Apollos may water, but God gives the increase.* Now if the husbandman cannot command Seed to grow out of the Ground, how much less can Ministers create Grace in Souls?

If in Natural things it is God that makes the Grass to spring, how much more in spiritual things? It is he makes:

makes the Soul to fructifie. Alas, it is not the parts and Eloquence of the Minister can beget Grace; that must be the work of Gods Spirit.

3. Here is our Duty, or work in order to the obtaining this Gift, that is, to *Pray the Lord of the Harvest, that he would send forth more Labourers into his Harvest.* Prayers, you know, that is the prevailing course for the removing any evil that lies upon us, or obtaining any good we stand in need of, *Psal. 50. 15. Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will hear you.* Such and such things God promises to do for his People: *But for this I will be sought unto,* saith the Lord. God will do good things for his Church and People, but he will do things in his own order. Here I might shew you the great power the Prayers of Gods People have with him. *The fervent effectual Prayer of the righteous prevaieth much. Acts 12.* You read there how *Herod* had put to death one of the Apostles. And *Peter* was likewise taken up too, and the Church go to Prayer; what was the issue? *Peter* was delivered. Likewise what became of *Herod*? He was smitten of God. As one said, Wo be to the Birds of prey, when Gods Turtles begin to cry and mourn before him. O that we were perswaded of this, that there is such a great deal of power and prevalency in Prayer, how should we be more exercised in this Duty both in publick and private? and to be representing the state of the Church to God as they did of *Lazarus* to Christ, *He whom thou lovest is dead;* so should we say, *He whom thou lovest, (thy Church) is sick and languishing,* ready to give up the Ghost. I would come to the
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A Funeral Sermon.

17

the last thing. There are only two or three *Uses* I would make of it.

Use I.

If it be the duty of every good Christian Man and Woman thus to pray and cry to God, for the sending more Labourers into his Harvest, then it shews us,

1. The necessity of a Gospel Ministry. What do you think of the Husbandmans Calling, is that a necessary Calling, to Plow, and sow the Land, that ye may have Bread to eat? What would your Houses and Families do without Bread? No more can a Church of God subsist in this world, without the Ministry of the Word. I know there are some ready to say, What need is there of mens Preaching, what need of the Ministry of Man? cannot God do it alone? Yea, we have Christ, and the teaching of the Spirit, what need is there of mans teaching? is not the Spirit above man, is not Christ above Ministers? I grant there is no necessity of Preaching the Word, with respect to God, he is able to save men and women without the Preaching of the Word, as well as with it, he doth not need the gifts and parts and tongue of any man for bringing souls home to himself. As *Israel* in the Wilderness, when they had no Plowing, yet God could feed them, he could bring them Bread from Heaven. But yet as Gods ordinary way of maintaining and feeding your Bodies, it is by Plowing and sowing the Field; so it is the ordinary way God hath set in his Church for feeding
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ing your souls. *It pleased him, 1 Cor. 1. 21. by the foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe;* and God will keep close to his own Ordinance, and honour his own Institution: As *Acts 9.* when *Paul* was converted, it was in an extraordinary way. It is true Christ did speak to him out of the Clouds, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest, &c.* and he said, *who art thou Lord?* Christ you know Preached himself to *Paul*, and he trembled and was astonished, and said, *Lord what wouldst thou have me to do?* and Christ said, *Arise and go into the City, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* Could not Christ have as well told him his own work and business? See how Christ begins the work, but would have *Paul* to wait upon him in his own way, therefore *Ananias* must be sent to *Paul*. The like instance you have in the next Chapter; there you read of *Cornelius* a devout man, yet knew little of Christ, and God sent an Angel to him, *Thy Prayer is heard, and thine Alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God, send therefore to Sopha and call Simon whose Surname is Peter, and he shall speak unto thee.* What was not the Angel as well able to have taught *Cornelius* as *Peter*? yea doubtless; but as if he had said, That is none of my Commission, therefore send for such a person, he shall speak to thee. Here I might spend time to shew you the necessity of the Ministry of the Word.

1. In order to Conversion, Regeneration, and bringing sinners to Christ. *Faith comes by hearing. who is Paul, &c. but Ministers by whom ye believed?* Do you look for seed-time without Plowing the Ground?

Ground? No more must you expect Grace without hearing the Word.

2. I might shew you the necessity hereof, for the building up of those that are Converted. When we are in Christ, when we are Believers, we are not now above the Ministry of the Word, above Ordinances. No my Brethren, this Ministry of the Word and Ordinances must continue in the Church as long as there is one soul to be saved, as long as one soul is out of Heaven; it must continue till the coming of Christ. Again,

2. If the sending forth of Labourers into the Harvest be such a desirable mercy, then it shews us how much we should prize a faithful Ministry. If God hath sent us faithful Ministers, we should look upon it as a great and wonderful blessing. It is the fruit of the Prayers and Blood of Christ, therefore if Christ hath disposed of us in such a place, where we have a faithful Ministry, we should exceedingly bless God for it; as David; Psal. 147. 20. *He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his Statutes and his Judgements unto Israel. He hath not dealt so by any Nation.* Other Nations had as much wealth, plenty of Gold and Silver; and more than they: but this is more than all outward blessings. So how great a blessing this is too, you may see in that Prophet *Jeremy* 30. 20. God promises his People there, *Though he should feed them with Bread of Adversity, and water of Affliction, yet they should have this Mercy, that*

their teachers, &c. A promise to a carnal heart is of no worth or esteem, but of great worth to a gracious heart. Though you should see sad times, here shall be your mercy, and blessing.

3. If it be such a desirable blessing for God to send forth Labourers into his Harvest, then sure it is a matter greatly to be lamented, when God is calling his faithful Labourers apace out of his Harvest; instead of increasing them, he is diminishing of them, he is removing the Teachers not only into corners, but into Graves. Here is just matter of lamentation and sorrow to us, when we consider how many faithful Labourers and eminent Preachers of the Word, God hath of late removed out of his Harvest. You know when *Samuel* died; 1 Sam. 28. 3. it is said, *They that buried him made a great lamentation for him.* And in *Acts* 8. 2. you read of devout men that carried *Stephen* to his Burial, and made great lamentation over him. And in *Acts* 20. when *Paul* tells them, they were like to see his face no more, that it was the last time he should ever Pray, or Preach with them, it sets them all a weeping and a mourning. I have read of one, that when he heard of the death of any godly man, he would fall a weeping to think of the great loss there was to the Church and People of God, in the death of every good Christian and gracious person. Brethren, if you look on the loss of a godly Parent, or Husband, a godly Friend or Neighbour, if you look upon such a loss as a great loss, as *David* mourned for his friend *Jonathan*, and Christ himself weeps over

over the Grave of *Lazarus*: What is then the death and loss of a godly Minister, yea of so many godly Ministers, when you have loss upon loss, death upon death, one week carrying one godly Minister to his Grave, and the next week carrying another? I am afraid we do not lay these sad rebukes of God to heart as we ought to do. It is not enough when you hear of such a Minister dead to be asking; how long was he sick, or what disease he died of: to say he was a good man, a good Preacher, and alas it was a great loss: but we should seriously consider such strokes, and lay it to heart, for *the Living will lay it to heart*. If we are living indeed, we should and shall lay them to heart: Why so? Because the loss of so many faithful Labourers as you have of late lost in these few years, in this City, it looks like a heavy Judgement of God against you. I do not say a Judgement to them, it may be a mercy to them; *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord*. Death is their gain and advantage: but the great loss is ours.

1. Are you not thereby deprived of any further fruit or benefit of their holy Labours? When the Vessel is broken, the Treasure, that is removed to Heaven, and you can be no more enriched by it. When the Tree is cut down, it yields no more fruit. How many faithful Preachers are gone, under whose shadow you did use to sit and feed with great delight? How many whose Preaching used to be to you as a lovely sound, and plea-

fant voice, whose Mouths are now stopped with Dust, so that you shall hear them Preach and Pray no more, your hearts shall be no more warmed by their Prayers and Sermons :

2. It is a Judgement, for sometimes, yea many times, when a faithful Labourer is taken away, there is, it may be, some loyterer comes in his room. *Acts 20. 17.* Paul tells them, *after his departure wolves would come*, instead of the Myrtle Tree, cometh up a Bryar or Thorn; as it is with many people and Congregations, who formerly had a godly painful Minister among them, and it may be were a weary of him, and this godly Minister is taken away, and there is a pricking Nettle cometh in his room; instead of faithful Seers, they are blind Guides, and *where the blind leads the blind*, Christ tells you the issue. The Scripture speaks much of these idle Shepherds, as a Judgement; instead of faithful Teachers they shall have those to give them a Stone instead of Bread.

3. It's a Judgement to be greatly lamented, when faithful Ministers are taken away, because it is commonly the sins of the People that do procure and have a hand in the death of their Minister. Here we might be enquiring, What are those sins by which God is so often provoked, to take away his Ministers from a People? There are two extreame people are apt to run into; either to over-value, or under-value their Ministers,

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The Scripture doth take notice of such an evil as that of *having the persons of men in admiration*, when we receive and love the Truth for the persons sake, and not the person for the Truths sake, when one is for *Paul*, another for *Apollos*. We may lose our enjoyments by our too high as well as too low prizing of them. Indeed the fault commonly lies on the other hand, that is, their undervaluing the Ministry of the Word; their unprofitableness, unthankfulness, barrenness under the droppings of the Word, this provokes God to make the Heavens as Brass to them; when they play with the Bread and Light, then God comes and removes the Light and takes away the Bread.

4. It's a Judgement to be greatly lamented when faithful Ministers are taken away out of the Harvest, because it is a sad prognostick of some greater Judgements, and some heavier evils that are coming upon a people. You know what the Prophet saith, *Isa. 57. 1. The righteous perish, and no man layeth it to heart, and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.* Oh, those Words of Christ (my Brethren) come into my thoughts; when he was a dying, and some were weeping for him, *weep not for me* (saith he) *but for your selves* and children, because of those miseries and calamities that are drawing nigh to you. Methinks it is the language of our dying Ministers, *weep not for us*, &c. When the Labourers are called home from the Harvest, it is a sign.

sign the night is a coming. When chirping Birds are removed into their nest, it is a sign the shadows of the evening are coming. When Lights are put out, what can we expect but that darkness will follow? When God calls off his Shepherds, we have just cause to fear he will loose Wolves upon the Flocks to devour and make a prey of them. My Brethren, if God should send such weather that men could not sow, or if when the Harvest should be grown up, there should be a mortality, that there were no men to reap it, you would think a Famine were coming, and lament over it as a sad and grievous thing. Oh, there is a Famine the Scripture speaks of, not of Bread, but of the Word, and when God takes away his Ministers so fast, have we not cause to fear this Famine is coming on upon us? Oh, this my Brethren, should melt your hearts into Prayers and Tears, and if you have any Groans or Tears, to pour them out before the Lord; if you have any interest in the Throne of Grace, to improve it, that God would send forth faithful Labourers into his Harvest. Here, my Brethren, I might bespeak you of this Congregation, more particularly, to lay to heart the sad breach God hath made among you in his late providence, in his removing him who was wont to labour in the midst of you. Methinks there are some circumstances in that stroke that particularly do require our serious consideration.

First

First of all, The suddenness and unexpectedness of that stroke. Not sudden to him, for not many days before he was taken sick he set his house in order, acquainting his Wife where his Will was, so that it seems he had some kind of presage of his approaching death; but sudden to us the stroke was. How many of you that were surprised and startled to hear of Mr. Henning's death? how many that scarce heard of his sickness until you heard he was dead? Who of you thought the last day you saw and heard him in this place, that it must be the last day you should hear and see him? Who of you when you heard him beginning to direct you how you must put on the first Piece of the spiritual Armour did imagine that he was so near of being unclothed himself, and to lay down his Earthly Tabernacle? God snatched him away, he had a mind to take him from us, and would not be hindered by the Prayers of his People.

Secondly, This circumstance doth aggravate the loss, namely, that he was taken away, though I cannot say in the Prime or flower of his strength, (for he had Laboured many years) yet in middle Age. For according to the course of nature, we might have enjoyed more of his Labours: he was not withered by old Age. When a tree stake is removed out of the hedge, it is not so great a loss as when a fruit-bearing tree is cut down.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Is there not this Aggravation attends it, namely, that he is taken away in such a time of scarcity and dearth of faithful Labourers? Consider my Brethren, the great Mortality of faithful Ministers that hath been of late years in this Nation, doth speak aloud to us to warn us of great evils hastening upon us.

Lastly, There is this circumstance, above all the rest, namely the Eminency of the Ministerial gifts, and privileges God had qualified him withall. In this respect he was like *Saul*, taller by the head than many of his Brethren; like *Benjamin*, he had a double, yea treble portion of spiritual gifts. He was such a *workman* (as the Apostle speaks,) *that needed not to be ashamed, able rightly to divide the word of truth*. I do not intend to enter into any commendation of him, though I might speak much of him, and yet speak below, not above his true worth. He needs not any such Spices to embalm his name, which hath left so sweet a savour behind him. It was not praise or Commendation of the dead; but instructions to the Living that I intended in this discourse. Only the more Eminent a person is for serviceableness and usefulness in the Church of God; when there are many can stand forth and say, It pleased God by such a mans Ministry to open my blind eyes, and others that can bear witness too how God hath spoken to their hearts, for quickning, comfort and counsel; I say the greater

See page 27 of the end of this sermon

is the loss of such an Instrument; and the more to be bewailed by us.

I would wind up all by one word of Counsel, that is to teach you how you may improve these sad losses. You know *Sampson* found honey in the Carcass of the dead Lion. There are many sweet and wholesome instructions to be gathered from the dead Ministers. *Abel though dead yet speaketh.* I may say of the dead Ministers though dead and laid in their graves, They speak to you; they speak with a louder voice, out of their Graves and Coffins, than ever they did out of their Pulpit. Here I might show you those several lessons you may learn from your dead Ministers, (but time is gone.) This one thing to be sure they call upon you for, that you would labour to remember, and put in Practice those Godly Sermons they Preached to you in their life-time. The death of Ministers should revive those Counsels and Comforts that you received in their life-time from them; and enliven the remembrance of them upon their hearts. *2 Kings 2. 14.* when *Elijah* was dead, *Elisha* takes up his mantle. I would have you be gathering up those instructions that the Ministers did let fall to you whilst they were alive; to remember how he spake on such a subject at such a time, and spoke such a word to my soul at another time. Here I might desire you to call to remembrance the late Sermons of this Eminent Servant of God; to remember his discourse of the grace of God which hath appeared in the Gospel, to

teach us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously and Godly even in this Present world. And his Sermons concerning the Love of the Son of God; And of the saving Operations of the Spirit of God: and to labour to shew forth the Works of the Spirit in your holy walking, according to those Sermons you heard from him so lately. *To put on the Armour of God, and to prepare for the evil day, that you may be able to stand in that day.* All those heavenly spiritual Gospel Sermons he Preached to you, call for holy, Heavenly and Gospel conversations from you. In a word, let it be your care to bring forth fruit Answerable to all the labour and cost God hath bestowed upon you. God will certainly call you to an account for the health, strength and sweat and labour and lives of his Servants he hath bestowed upon you. Therefore people had need to look to it, for God highly values his dear Servants lives and labours, and will have a valuable consideration from you or upon you. Therefore my Brethren to conclude, what you would that your Garden and field should be unto you when you have digged them, planted them, manured them, plowed them, sowed them, and bestowed cost and labour upon them, that you should be to God. To bestow plowing and seed upon a field; and yet to bear nothing, that discourages you; but if there is a crop coming, and when the Labourers find there is a good crop that they can fill their Arms with sheaves, this encourages you. Then, *Deut. 16. 14.* when the Harvest is done, they make

make merry together, have a Harvest feast, and have Harvest songs and are merry: I say, then are those words of Christ fulfilled, *John 4. 35, 36.* and with that I shall conclude. *Say not that there are yet four moneths and then cometh Harvest, behold I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to Harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth may rejoice together.* Thus it is where there is a good Harvest, he that Plows the field, was Instrumental to begin the work, and he that soweth the first seed of Grace, and he that reaps the Corn, those that had a hand in perfecting the work, all these shall rejoice together. Then all those faithful Ministers that have laboured according to the Talents given unto them of the Lord: then the people too that are made fruitful to God, that have received the seed in good and honest hearts, they shall rejoice with their Ministers, there shall be a Harvest-feast and Harvest-songs, the supper of the Lamb and the Song of the Lamb, and the Angels they will come in and have a share, (for they gather the Corn into the Barn) and both Angels, Ministers, and People shall all sing Praise and rejoice together, and that for ever and ever.

Use.

There are other Uses we should have made of this point. We might have made application of it

to such as are of the Ministerial calling, (if there were any such here) to stir them up to follow their labour; and to reprove such as are Loiterers not Labourers. *Paul* could say he had *laboured more abundantly than they all*; but may it not be said of some, *they labour not at all*? Oh how many curses doth the Scripture denounce against such as do this *work of the Lord negligently*! But I shall not stay on this, as not tiring the present Auditory.

Use.

Let me shut up all with this one word more to the People. Remember the lesson and duty we have been teaching this day, and make Conscience of practising it. If ever it were a duty in season for you to put on sackcloth and lye in the dust, to mourn and mourn bitterly for the loss of faithful Ministers, it is now, when they dye and drop into their Graves so fast: If ever there were a time for you (Christians) to crie and crie aloud to *the Lord of the Harvest to send forth more labourers into the Harvest*, it is now, when there is like to be so great a scarcity of them. And truly if I were able to speak so as to be heard by all the Christians of *England* (who are commonly known and distinguished by the name of Non-conformists) I would earnestly bespeak them all, that they would with one heart and one consent agree to set apart a day of Humiliation and Prayer

Prayer for this very end : for certainly the loss of many Ministers, so Eminent in their Generation, as have been lately taken away, is a severe Rebuke from the Lord, and I fear a sad preface of some greater evils at hand, than we think of.

Remember (my Beloved) who it is that here bids you *Pray the Lord of the Harvest*; our blessed Lord himself, who hath given you not only his command for this duty, but his own example too in this very case, as you may see if you read *Luke 6. 12*. It is said, *Jesus went out into a Mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer.* If you ask what was the Occasion that he was a whole night in Prayer, the *thirteenth Verse* will declare it, for *when it was day, he called his Disciples, and of them he chose twelve, &c.* The occasion seems to be, the work that he had to do the next morning, to send forth his Apostles to Preach the Gospel: Christ looked upon this as a great work, a weighty and solemn matter, that required Prayer. And whatever men may think of it, it is the greatest work that ever any of the sons of men were employed in since the world began; and the Truths we Preach to you are so glorious, and of such infinite Concernment, as you souls will have cause Eternally to bless God for, if you receive them in faith and love, and such as you would not have been without

without the knowledge of for ten thousand
 worlds. You therefore that have any love
 to Christ, any love to the truth, any love
 to the souls and salvation of men, oh Pray,
 all and every one of you, Pray, pray the
*Lord of the Harvest that he would send forth
 Labourers into the Harvest.*

F I N I S.

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